**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of confining a commodity in a composite container having a plurality of constituents, comprising the steps of:

assembling the constituents into the container around the commodity;

providing at least some of the constituents with characteristic indicia not later than in the course of the assembling step;

processing the characteristic indicia into information which is characteristic of the assembled container; and

encoding the information upon at least one constituent of the container.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing step includes randomly selecting at least one of the characteristic indicia.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing step includes applying all of the characteristic indicia to the respective constituents prior to the assembling step.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein said encoding step is carried out subsequent to said assembling step.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing step includes applying at least one of the characteristic indicia to the respective constituent of the container in the course of said assembling step.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said encoding step includes applying the information to the at least one constituent upon completion of said assembling step.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one constituent is accessible, at least in part, upon completion of said assembling step.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the encoded information is decodable without necessitating even partial opening of the assembled container.

9. The method of claim 1 of confining a commodity in a container having a plurality of constituents including an inner envelope directly surrounding the commodity in the assembled container, an outer envelope surrounding the inner envelope, an insert disposed between the inner and outer envelopes of the assembled container, a light-transmitting outermost envelope surrounding the outer envelope of the assembled container, and a tear strip borne by the outermost envelope, wherein said providing step includes applying indicia to each of the inner, outer and outermost envelopes as well as to the insert and to the tear strip.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said assembling step includes confining the commodity in the inner envelope, thereupon applying the insert around a selected part of the inner envelope, thereafter confining the inner envelope and the insert in the outer envelope, and thereafter applying the outermost envelope, with the tear strip thereon, around the outer envelope.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said assembling step includes advancing the commodity along a predetermined path and draping the constituents of the container around the advancing commodity in a predetermined sequence in successive portions of said path.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of processing into said information data pertaining to at least one of (a) the commodity and (b) the container.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said data denote at least one of the time of the assembling step, the location of the assembling step and at least one person in charge of the assembling step.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein said encoding step includes visibly applying said information to an exposed part of at least one constituent of the assembled container.

15. Apparatus for confining successive ones of a series of commodities in composite containers each of which has a set of constituents, comprising:

means for conveying successive commodities of the series along a predetermined path;

means for assembling the constituents of the sets into containers, including placing the constituents around successive commodites in a predetermined sequence in successive portions of the path;

means for providing at least some constituents of each set with characteristic indicia not later than in the respective portions of said path;

means for processing the characteristic indicia on said at least some constituents of each set into information which is characteristic of the respective assembled containers; and

means for encoding the information upon the respective containers.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein at least some of the characteristic indicia are randomly selected indicia.

17. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said assembling means comprises a cigarette packing machine.

18. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said means for providing includes at least one laser.

19. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said means for providing includes at least one printer.

20. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the constituents of each set include a first blank for conversion into an inner envelope of a container, a second blank for conversion into an outer envelope of a container, a third blank for conversion into an outermost envelope of a container and an insert for conversion into a collar between the inner and outer envelopes of a container, said providing means including a first laser for the application of indicia to first blanks, a second laser for the application of indicia to second blanks, a first printer for the application of indicia to inserts and a second printer for the application of indicia to third blanks, said means for encoding including a laser.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the constituents of each set further include a tear strip borne by the respective third blank, said second printer being arranged to apply indicia to the tear strips.

22. The apparatus of claim 20, further comprising additional conveying means for delivering the blanks and the inserts to the respective portions of said path.